



With \$2.25M in, more sought for sluice gate

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GREENWICH TWP --The township may enter an interlocal agreement with the county to secure \$750,000 still needed to replace the broken sluice gate on Floodgate Road. On Thursday, Acting Gov. Richard Codey appropriated \$2.25 million for replacing the sluice gate -- a project expected to cost \$3 million. Although the gate falls on township property, it is part of a dilapidated flood protection system designed to protect at least five other towns and 10,000 county residents from devastation in the event of a flood. "Freeholder Director Stephen Sweeney and I only started discussing the possibility of an interlocal agreement on Monday," said Mayor George Shivery. "We really haven't got a lot of details, but there are two basic ideas behind it. One is that if there is ever any type of emergency, we could call on the county to use their manpower and resources to deal with it. Also, they might be able to help us get the \$750,000 we need to replace the sluice gate." Sweeney said the county would be "more than willing" to work with Greenwich, adding that the county recently entered into an interlocal services agreement with Logan Township to help clear 600 yards of levee which is also part of the system. "It tends to be more cost-effective when we do things, so as far as working with Greenwich Township, we want to help in any way that we can." Shivery said the township is also working with Army Corps of Engineers to see if federal funds could contribute to the \$750,000 tab. State Assemblyman John Burzichelli, D-3 of Paulsboro, was one of the sponsors of the bill that provided state money for the project. "Now that the bill has been signed, the funds are available to Greenwich Township as soon as they can deliver on their part," said Burzichelli. "We're talking about bonding and a lot of legal red tape," Shivery explained. "That means months before we can even start construction, and probably about a year before the construction can be completed. But things are moving -- it looks like everyone's on board and has the same goal in mind, so hopefully we can get some kind of plan to fix this as soon as possible." While the floodgate needs to be completely replaced, Shivery said the township has already replaced two of the faulty hinges on the gate and will replace the remaining two soon. "That's just a stop-gap measure," the mayor said. "We need to make sure it's operating properly between now and the time when we can get a new one in place." The sluice gate is part of a Delaware River flood protection system which county and local officials say has been neglected due to disputes in ownership and responsibility for maintenance. The system includes the sluice gate on Floodgate Road, the "White Sluice Gate," and a 412-mile levee. Sweeney has estimated that the total cost of repairing the system will be around \$30 million. According to Merv Brokke, a spokesperson for the Army Corps of Engineers, the corps is not responsible for repairing the levee because it did not build it. However, Brokke added that if Logan Township's 600-yard portion of the levee is cleared of underbrush, weeds and trees that have grown there over the years, the corps can inspect it and, if it receives at least a "minimally acceptable" rating, will insure 80 percent of the costs to fix it -- if or when it fails. Municipal and county workers and even a private resident have spent the last two weeks clearing the levee. "It looked pretty good last time we inspected it," said Brokke, adding that the corps inspected Logan's portion of the levee last Friday. "There were still a few more trees that needed to be taken down, but I would say that the corps should give it a minimally acceptable rating pretty soon." Local, county and state officials -- including Sweeney, Logan Mayor Frank Minor, and U.S. Rep. Rob Andrews -- have said they hold the corps responsible for the levee. "The issue of the levee is still stalled," said Shivery. "But now that this state money is in place and everyone's working to get the rest of it together, things should start to happen. "I think Hurricane Katrina has definitely had something to do with shaking the foundations and getting everybody to move to action," he added.

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